

Driving through the quiet Christmas-lit neighborhoods of Montclair, New Jersey on my way to the boutique-filled street where Wellmont Theatre was located was a nice change of pace from my usual battles with city traffic. I was surprised to find myself in the area, especially for a concert. When one thinks of great rock n' roll crowds, Montclair isn't exactly the first place to spring to mind. But judging from The Gaslight Anthem's homecoming show (the band is from nearby New Brunswick), and the bookings at the theater over the past year, that's bound to change soon.

This band has been on a steady rise since their song "The '59 Sound" took off on radio a little over a year ago. As singer Brian Fallon grinned at the sold out house, he marveled that there used to be about ten people who'd come to the show, and now it's "all of us." The fans showed their love by singing along to all the songs of the lengthy set, which included the beautiful "Blue Jeans & White T-Shirts", "Great Expectations", "The Navesink Banks", "We Came to Dance", "Miles Davis & The Cool", and a great cover of Tom Petty's "Refugee." A memorable moment was the entire house singing the end of "We're Getting A Divorce, You Keep the Diner": "Stay hungry, stay free and do the best you can." Towards the end of the set, opening act Vision's Dave Franklin came out to join in on "Say I Won't (Recognize)."

Once again the favorite song of the night for me was "Here's Looking at You Kid", which Fallon introduced as being about girls or "boys if you want it to be", and how they titled the song as such because you wish things would go as smooth as a Humphrey Bogart movie, but they never do. If pressed, I'd say the only disappointment of the night was the absence of "Boombboxes and Dictionaries", but then that just gives me an excuse to catch this band again. Of course putting on a great rock show that just hits the spot is also a great reason!